

Revised 3/17/05

2004-2005 No Child Left Behind - Blue Ribbon Schools Program

U.S. Department of Education

Cover Sheet

Type of School: ☒ Elementary ☐ Middle ☐ High ☐ K-12

Name of Principal Mrs. Barbara C. Bisset
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Sparks Elementary School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 601 Belfast Road
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address)

Sparks MD 21152-9706
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Baltimore School Code Number* 0801

Telephone (410) 887-7900 Fax (410) 472-3190

Website/URL http://www.bcps.org/schools/profile.asp?loc_code=0801 E-mail spes0801@bcps.org

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2, and certify that to the best of my knowledge all information is accurate.

(Principal's Signature) Date _____

Name of Superintendent* Dr. Joe A. Hairston
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Baltimore County Public Schools Tel. (410) 887-4554

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2, and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

(Superintendent's Signature) Date _____

Name of School Board President/Chairperson Mr. James. R. Sasiadek
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this package, including the eligibility requirements on page 2, and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature) Date _____

**Private Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

[Include this page in the school's application as page 2.]

The signatures on the first page of this application certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct.

1. The school has some configuration that includes grades K-12. (Schools with one principal, even K-12 schools, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The school has not been in school improvement status or been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state's adequate yearly progress requirement in the 2004-2005 school year.
3. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, it has foreign language as a part of its core curriculum.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 1999 and has not received the 2003 or 2004 *No Child Left Behind – Blue Ribbon Schools Award*.
5. The nominated school or district is not refusing the OCR access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
6. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if the OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
7. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school, or the school district as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
8. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

All data are the most recent year available.

DISTRICT (Questions 1-2 not applicable to private schools)

1. Number of schools in the district:

103	Elementary schools
27	Middle schools
0	Junior high schools
26	High schools
6	Other (Special Education schools)
162	TOTAL

2. District Per Pupil Expenditure: \$ 8,562.00
 Average State Per Pupil Expenditure: \$ 8,765.00

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

3. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Urban or large central city
<input type="checkbox"/>	Suburban school with characteristics typical of an urban area
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Suburban
<input type="checkbox"/>	Small city or town in a rural area
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rural

4. 2 Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school.
10 If fewer than three years, how long was the previous principal at this school?

5. Number of students as of October 1 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school only:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total	Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK				7			
K	35	36	71	8			
1	32	37	69	9			
2	59	32	91	10			
3	50	34	84	11			
4	56	48	104	12			
5	45	48	93	Other			
6							
TOTAL STUDENTS IN THE APPLYING SCHOOL →							512

[Throughout the document, round numbers to avoid decimals.]

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the students in the school:
- | |
|---|
| <u>92</u> % White |
| <u>2</u> % Black or African American |
| <u>1</u> % Hispanic or Latino |
| <u>4</u> % Asian/Pacific Islander |
| <u>1</u> % American Indian/Alaskan Native |
| 100% Total |

Use only the five standard categories in reporting the racial/ethnic composition of the school.

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the past year: 8 %

(This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.)

(1)	Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	21
(2)	Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	16
(3)	Subtotal of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	37
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October	491
(5)	Subtotal in row (3) divided by total in row (4)	1
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	8

8. Limited English Proficient students in the school: 1 %
4 Total Number Limited English Proficient

Number of languages represented: 2
Specify languages: Spanish and Russian

9. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 4 %

Total number students who qualify: 21

If this method does not produce an accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families or the school does not participate in the federally-supported lunch program, specify a more accurate estimate, tell why the school chose it, and explain how it arrived at this estimate.

10. Students receiving special education services: 15 %
75 Total Number of Students Served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

<u>1</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>4</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>24</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>40</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>1</u> Mental Retardation	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness
<u>5</u> Developmentally Delayed	<u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance

11. Indicate number of full-time and part-time staff members in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff	
	<u>Full-time</u>	<u>Part-Time</u>
Administrator(s)	<u>2</u>	
Classroom teachers	<u>20</u>	<u>1</u>
Special resource teachers/specialists	<u>11</u>	<u>.9</u>
Paraprofessionals	<u>2</u>	
Support staff	<u>6</u>	
Total number	<u>41</u>	<u>1.9</u>

12. Average school student-“classroom teacher” ratio: 24 to 1
13. Show the attendance patterns of teachers and students as a percentage. The student dropout rate is defined by the state. The student drop-off rate is the difference between the number of entering students and the number of exiting students from the same cohort. (From the same cohort, subtract the number of exiting students from the number of entering students; divide that number by the number of entering students; multiply by 100 to get the percentage drop-off rate.) Briefly explain in 100 words or fewer any major discrepancy between the dropout rate and the drop-off rate. (Only middle and high schools need to supply dropout rates and only high schools need to supply drop-off rates.)

	2003-2004	2002-2003	2001-2002	2000-2001	1999-2000
Daily student attendance	97 %	97 %	97 %	97 %	97 %
Daily teacher attendance	97 %	95 %	94 %	95 %	95 %
Teacher turnover rate	12 %	18 %	7 %	10 %	Not available
Student dropout rate (middle/high)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Student drop-off rate (high school)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

PART III - SUMMARY

Sparks Elementary School is located in the northern section of Baltimore County. It began in 1909 as Sparks Agricultural High School with an enrollment of fifty-one students. The school was the only agricultural school in the state of Maryland and the first of only two public agricultural schools in the United States. Upon the completion of Hereford High School in 1953, the school became Sparks Elementary. On January 8, 1995, fire completely destroyed the historic old Sparks school building. The new school building opened on November 23, 1998. The uniquely designed building located on a sixty-three acre site is bordered by a stream that has become the focal point of numerous environmental learning experiences. Because of access provided by Interstate 83, Sparks is a growing residential area..

The school community reflects a middle to high socioeconomic level with many professional families and an active volunteer program. In 1997, Sparks was recognized as “One of Baltimore’s Best Elementary Schools” by *Baltimore Magazine*. The school community is primarily Caucasian with small groups of Hispanic, African American, and Asian students.

For the 2004-2005 school year, the school has an enrollment of over 500 students in grades kindergarten through five, which is fifty students over our state capacity of 450 students. There are four half-day kindergarten classes and eighteen homeroom classes. Thirty special education students are fully included in the regular program.

Sparks Elementary is committed to high achievement for every student. Students are instructed using the Baltimore County Public Schools Curriculum which is aligned with the Voluntary State Curriculum. This integrated program incorporates all major content areas: reading, mathematics, social studies, science, health and safety, spelling, art, physical education, vocal and instrumental music, and media. Supplemental services and assistance are provided in library, nursing, special reading, learning disabilities, speech/language pathology, and guidance. The Primary Talent Development Program and the Reading and Math PACE Programs enrich instruction for students in the primary grades. Students in the intermediate grades participate in the Gifted and Talented Program. Block scheduling is used to provide students with small, flexible instructional groups using appropriate materials, strategies, and resources to address their specific learning needs. Sparks Elementary has an ongoing tradition of high standards by offering a challenging academic program provided by experienced and caring staff.

All of the teachers hold standard or advanced certificates and the staff has a healthy balance of veteran teachers with advanced degrees and less experienced teachers working towards graduate degrees.

Sparks Elementary is characterized by highly supportive parents who provide educational support to teachers and children through enrichment programs and volunteerism. Volunteers contributed over 7000 hours last year supporting school programs and enhancing academic and community experiences. The Sparks PTA is actively involved and supports the curriculum by generously funding cultural arts programs, additional instructional materials, and community events. The School Improvement Team, consisting of parents, teachers, and administrators, works together in order to create and implement a yearly school improvement plan which ensures that all students reach their maximum potential during their formative elementary years. An active Student Council coordinates a variety of community outreach and charitable programs throughout the school year.

Sparks has continued to uphold its tradition of high expectations and outstanding achievement for nearly one hundred years. Its accomplishments continue to be a direct result of motivated and eager students, supportive parents, and a highly qualified, dedicated staff. Sparks is committed to nurturing the unique capabilities of all students as they prepare to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

PART IV – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

1. Assessment Results in Reading and Math

From 1993 until 2002, Maryland used the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) to assess and monitor student and school progress. This program included performance tasks that assessed grades 3, 5, and 8 Maryland Learning Outcomes in reading, writing, language usage, mathematics, science, and social studies. The MSPAP measured the performance of Maryland schools by illustrating how well the students could solve problems cooperatively and individually, their ability to apply what they have learned to real world problems, and how well students could relate and use knowledge from different subject areas. School achievement was measured on three proficiency levels: Excellent, Satisfactory, and Not Met.

In March, 2003—in response to new requirements from the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2001 (ESEA, a.k.a. No Child Left Behind)—Maryland introduced the Maryland School Assessment (MSA). The MSA is administered to students in grades 3, 5, and 8 in mathematics, and 3, 5, 8, and 10 in reading. Student, school, district, and state achievement is measured on three proficiency levels: Advanced, Proficient, and Basic.

The MSA produces a score that describes how well a student masters the reading and mathematics content specified in the Maryland Content Standards and the Voluntary State Curriculum (VSC). MSA scores are criterion-referenced scores depicting student performance against the Maryland VSC. Students receive a proficiency level that categorizes their performance as basic, proficient, or advanced. To clarify, a student performing at the advanced level in reading can read above-grade level texts and demonstrate the ability to comprehend complex literature and informational passages. In math, a student performing at the advanced level can solve complex problems and demonstrate superior ability to reason mathematically.

Sparks Elementary School has historically scored at high levels on both the MSPAP and the MSA. The most current assessment data from the 2004 MSA maintains this trend as both the overall school scores and the scores for sub groups showed growth in both reading and math. Reading scores were particularly strong with 99% of third grade students and 98% of fifth grade students scoring at the proficient level or above. While scores for third and fifth grade math were slightly lower than the reading scores, 96% and 93% respectively, they still place Sparks Elementary school among the highest performing schools in the state. It is also significant that the number of students scoring at the advanced level on the MSA increased for every subgroup on both grade levels for both reading and math from 2003 to 2004. Special education students as a subgroup demonstrated significant growth achieving 100% proficiency in Grade 3 Math and Grade 5 Reading as well as at least a 10 percentage points gain in Grade 3 Reading and Grade 5 Math.

In an effort to continually improve our levels of achievement, mathematics has served as an area of focus for the 2004-2005 School Improvement Plan. The plan outlines strategies to provide interventions for students needing support in math and to provide enrichment for students so the number of students achieving at the advanced level will increase.

Sparks Elementary School is committed to all students achieving at high levels. Our current assessment data documents our success. We are very proud of the fact that our student achievement places us among the highest performing schools in both Baltimore County and the state of Maryland. Using the MSA data as a baseline, we continually analyze formative and summative data to adjust our instruction and interventions to ensure that there are no gaps in learning. The scores earned are a direct reflection of the dedication of the staff as they strive to meet the needs of all students and the hard work of the students themselves.

2. Assessment Data

Sparks Elementary School is diligent in using assessment data to understand and improve both student and school performance. For reading, data from the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) are maintained on reading databases for both teachers and administrators to review for every student in the school. In addition, data from the Houghton Mifflin Integrated Theme Tests and the Baltimore County Benchmark Tests are entered into the reading database. For math, a corresponding math database is maintained using data from the MSA and Baltimore County Summative Assessments.

Data analysis on both the reading and math databases is then performed on a monthly basis by teachers and administrators. For students performing below grade level expectations, immediate action is taken to improve student performance. After teachers and administrators discuss formative assessment results, a student may be recommended for different levels of intervention. The Student Support Team (SST) may be asked to monitor the student for possible recommendation to the IEP Team, the student may be included in the after school tutoring program to receive additional help, or the student may be moved to a different group for reading or math so that he or she can receive the instruction and support needed to close the achievement gap. Students are also monitored for performing above grade level expectations. These students may be recommended for gifted and talented (GT) programs or they also may be moved to a different group to receive enriched instruction. Flexible grouping and support services based on student performance are a key component to Sparks Elementary School's success.

Assessment data drive instruction. For both reading and math, assessment results are analyzed by looking at specific concepts and skills so that both teachers and administrators know what students have mastered and what needs to be re-taught in future lessons. Teachers and administrators work together to analyze student performance and assessment results ensuring that appropriate instruction is given at all times so that each teacher is a successful instructor and each student is a successful learner.

3. School Communication

Sparks maintains its commitment to the family and community by communicating in a variety of traditional and creative ways. This communication serves as a means to inform parents of student progress as well as involve them in the multitude of school wide activities. It is evident that all staff members value this part of our school culture as it is a school-wide goal to conference with the parent or guardian of every child by the end of the school year. Last year, conferences were held with 95% of the families. In these conferences, teachers may communicate student progress using a school wide, color-coded database for math and reading or utilize the daily recordkeeping maintained by all teachers. Parents are kept updated on their child's academic progress via interim reports, progress reports, weekly work folders, or planners requiring a daily parent signature.

Written information is disseminated in several ways including a biweekly newsletter from the principal informing parents about school events, successes, opportunities, and concerns. Each student is provided with a Home/School Communication Folder which is sent home daily to provide current information for parents. Email and voice mail are also used for home/school communication. The strong and active PTA sends home a monthly newsletter and conducts regular and subcommittee meetings each month. Each grade level sends newsletters informing parents of information specific to their child's grade such as field trips, speakers, curricular topics, and homework. The monthly guidance newsletter informs parents about guidance activities. Finally the PTA and school both host websites that provide updated information and links to teacher emails.

Many evening meetings and programs are offered throughout the year providing unique opportunities for parents to access information about enriching their child's education such as a Gifted and Talented Information Night, Exploratory Music Showcase, Science Fair, and parenting classes offered through our partnership with the HELPS Coalition. Informal interaction and conferencing with teachers occurs with many parents who volunteer in the classroom and at the multitude of PTA sponsored activities for the school community.

4. Sharing our Success

The faculty and staff of Sparks Elementary have demonstrated a long term and consistent commitment to sharing the success of our students as well as our professional expertise. Faculty members are involved in writing, piloting, evaluating, and updating countywide curriculum in science, language arts, math, social studies, gifted and talented education, and technology education. Teachers frequently present new curriculum initiatives at countywide staff development sessions and many have taught related in-service and college level courses.

Classroom teachers, special area teachers, and instructional assistants regularly volunteer to participate in countywide workshops and visit other schools to share successful classroom initiatives, projects, and instructional techniques. Teachers at the 3rd and 5th grade level, the technology specialist, and the reading specialist have made individual presentations at statewide conventions about successful classroom based projects, the integration of technology and curriculum, and innovative reading strategies.

Faculty members regularly mentor high school seniors who are considering becoming education majors in college and supervise student teachers from Towson University, College of Notre Dame, and Villa Julie College. Sparks is currently in the process of establishing a Professional Development School in partnership with Villa Julie College. Staff members have taken the initiative to implement a tutoring program for students with special needs and Sparks has formed a partnership with the local middle school to involve former students as tutors.

The school nurse and physical education department collaborate to host a Health Fair which showcases school and community based health care initiatives. Staff members regularly seek the opportunities to share our success, not for personal benefit or ambition, but instead, for the benefit of other teachers and students. Because of the level of enthusiasm and commitment to improving instruction both at Sparks and elsewhere, an ongoing dynamic and positive environment has been created at Sparks.

PART V – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Describe the School's Curriculum

The Sparks Elementary School faculty, staff, and administration work together to provide a quality instructional program for all students. Students are engaged in a learning environment that promotes the individual success of each child. Instruction is consistently aligned with the Voluntary State Curriculum to ensure that standards are being met. By basing our instruction on the Voluntary State Curriculum, the focus is on what each child needs to know for the four core content areas at certain landmark points in his or her academic career. Reading/language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science instruction is delivered in such a way that students will meet the requirements mapped out by the Voluntary State Curriculum.

All students are actively engaged in learning and careful attention is given to the specific learning needs of students. The academic success of all students is addressed through three basic levels of instruction: gifted and talented, regular curriculum, and regular curriculum with supports. Within these levels further differentiation is provided for students who require special interventions. In this way, differentiation is provided for students who require a rigorous and challenging program, standard curriculum, or extra support.

Enrichment and support of instruction can be found throughout the program. The core content area instruction is integrated as well as enhanced by other enrichment programs. For example, field trips, assemblies, guest speakers, technology integration, a media studio, and Green School activities are geared to engage students in the content areas, providing the chance for students to become actively involved and interested in learning.

Reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies are delivered on a daily basis. Through a school-wide collaborative effort, each core content area allows students to connect learning with real-life experiences. In this way, students make associations and understand the purpose of learning. In reading, students exhibit their comprehension of text using a variety of skills and strategies like decoding, monitoring and clarifying, predicting, making inferences, summarizing, and evaluating the author's craft. In written language, students are engaged in meaningful, integrated writing processes that require them to produce written compositions with organized thoughts and clear descriptions. In the mathematics program, students first learn concepts in a concrete format using a variety of manipulatives. Next, they move on to a more abstract level, associating these concepts with words and numbers. Finally, students describe their problem solving methods and strategies, using appropriate mathematics vocabulary. The hands-on science program allows students to calculate hypotheses, perform purposeful investigations, work in cooperative groups, and communicate results. Social studies is delivered in such a way that students learn the fundamentals for becoming responsible citizens through the examination of history, geography, economics, civics, and multicultural education. Field trips integrated into core curricular areas are designed to extend and reinforce classroom instruction. Sparks Elementary School's high standards support student academic growth.

Art, cultural arts assemblies, vocal music, and instrumental music encourage students to excel in the arts. Participation by students in physical education enhances student health and well-being. As we look toward the future, the technology and library media programs teach children the skills they will need to become technologically literate.

Sparks Elementary School's success is a combination of the collaborative planning, implementation, and higher-level learning that takes place each and every day. Over two hundred volunteers, a very involved PTA, dedicated administration, staff, students, and parents insure the students' continued high achievement.

2. Describe the School's Reading Curriculum

The reading program at Sparks Elementary School is a successful blend of highly qualified teachers utilizing the best practices of all instructional methods. Strategies include whole group and small group instruction combined with individual instruction as needed. Teachers incorporate all five areas of reading education including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Flexible groups are used which allow for initial student placement at the appropriate level as well as for movement from one level to another whenever necessary. Co-teaching models are employed at every grade level, including Kindergarten, which allow for especially small groups and individual support. Teachers plan together to assure thorough consistent assessment and instruction.

Pre-assessment and intense direct instruction in Open Court phonics begin in Kindergarten and persist through the third grade. As students become proficient decoders, instruction in comprehension strategies increases and continues through the fifth grade. Competent readers in first and second grade participate in the Primary Achievement and Curriculum Enrichment (PACE) program. Highly capable readers in third, fourth and fifth grade participate in gifted and talented groups. The breadth and depth of our reading materials ensure that all students are exposed to a variety of texts and genres at their appropriate levels.

Parent and grandparent volunteers assist with special programs at several grade levels. One-on-one tutoring for word recognition in first grade targets students who need extra help to read on grade level. *The Great Poetry Race* in second grade helps all students develop and refine their fluency skills. In addition, one special educator uses *Soar to Success*, a companion program to our *Houghton Mifflin Legacy of Literacy*, to improve comprehension in third grade.

Clearly, the underpinning of success at Sparks is the determination to exhaust every avenue of prevention, every opportunity for early intervention, and every possibility for enrichment to guarantee the success of every student.

3. Describe another curriculum of the school's choice.

Sparks has had a long standing commitment to providing students with authentic science experiences, nurturing an understanding of the scientific process, and promoting the development of a strong environmental ethic. The nature of our campus, which includes meadows, wetlands, and a stream, allows for unique opportunities for hands-on learning.

Students are regularly involved in stream quality monitoring and a variety of land based watershed protection activities. A mile-long nature trail has been established on campus and Sparks is one of the sites of a countywide blue bird migration project. The local parent and business community are actively involved and grants have been secured from a variety of environmental funding sources. Students from all grade levels work cooperatively to research, plan and establish butterfly gardens, and plant native species in wetland and meadow areas, often in partnership with local secondary schools and civic organizations. The Science Academic Team has taken the initiative to work with environmental specialists from local and statewide organizations and the local parent and business communities to enhance the science curriculum.

A school wide recycling program, spearheaded by the fifth grade, involves the recycling of paper, computer cartridges, and cell phones. Funds that are secured through the recycling program are used to purchase science materials for the school.

Sparks has received the Maryland Green School Award which recognizes schools that have an ongoing environmental commitment.

The staff regularly attends workshops, conferences and conventions in science. Staff members at many levels have been involved in writing, piloting, evaluating, and presenting countywide science curriculum.

A special effort is made to integrate technology in the science curriculum, and students regularly use technology to research, document, and share their scientific experiences. Sparks regularly promotes the understanding of the scientific process as part of classroom instruction. The spring Science Fair Night features student projects and presentations and also special programs by local science organizations. Science presentations are a regular part of our ongoing Cultural Arts Program, funded by the Sparks PTA.

4. Describe the different instructional methods the school uses to improve student learning.

Sparks School's steadfast implementation of the best instructional methods assures achievement for every student. Assessment data are analyzed to determine what students know and how students learn. Recognizing that learning is developmental, teachers differentiate and scaffold instruction according to the needs of our students. The methods include direct instruction, guided practice, independent practice, and authentic application of what is learned. Teachers employ varied techniques that embrace diverse learning styles and incorporate visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning modalities. Regular classroom teachers use cooperative learning, demonstration, exploration, and reciprocal teaching across all subject areas. Primary teachers access the Primary Talent Development program for all students to explore and expand their abilities. Special area teachers use Connections, a process that links art, music, physical education, and library studies to our core curricula.

Special education resource teachers are trained in *Wilson* and *Soar to Success*, two structured, small group programs that improve word recognition and comprehension. The reading specialist coordinates a one-on-one tutoring program for first graders who require supplemental instruction to read on grade level. These specialists co-teach with regular classroom teachers in all grades, from kindergarten through fifth grade in support of those students who need differentiated assistance. In addition, they form small groups for specific preview and review of new skills and concepts to help students maintain proficiency in their work. Time is built into the schedule to provide for collaborative planning so lessons are coordinated appropriately.

Instructional assistants support regular classroom teachers to give extra help to students as needed. They meet with selected students before and after school to assist them with the organizational skills necessary for proficiency in core subject areas. Students who need help with homework participate in the after-school tutoring program. Former Sparks students, now in middle school and high school, serve as tutors under the guidance of faculty members four days a week during the second semester.

Without a doubt, Sparks offers an extensive range of instructional methods that focus on students' strengths while providing appropriate support and interventions. Teaching, re-teaching, and enriching occurs as the ability of each student demands.

5. Describe the school's professional development program.

The professional development program at Sparks Elementary School is based on the commitment that every teacher has made to grow professionally and to help every student achieve. In the spring of the school year, an extensive needs assessment is completed by the staff to determine the instructional needs of our students and to begin planning grade level as well as school wide professional development for the next school year. As a part of the appraisal process, each teacher sets professional goals based on the needs documented in the School Improvement Plan. Four questions are used to frame our thinking as teachers use student achievement data to determine areas where they need to grow professionally so that they can provide more effective instruction for students: *What is it we want all students to know? How will we know if they have learned it? How will we respond when they don't learn it? How will we respond if they already know it?*

As a result, our professional development program addresses a wide range of topics and strategies and is presented in various ways. Teachers attend county in-service courses and many are enrolled in graduate level college work focused on math, reading, or special education. Faculty meetings are used to address topics such as learning differences, differentiation of instruction, and interventions to meet the needs of students whether they need support or enrichment. Significant professional development takes place in the many formal and informal team meetings that happen as a daily part of the school day. Grade level and cross grade level teams share strategies, plan instruction, and share materials on a regular basis. Veteran teachers mentor their younger colleagues and newer teachers bring fresh ideas and energy to the educational process. The result is an instructional program that is effective, creative, differentiated, focused on individual student achievement, and engaging for students.

PART VII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Maryland School Assessment (MSA) for 2003 and 2004
Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) for 2002

MATHEMATICS Test – MSA, 2003 and 2004 Publisher – CTB McGraw Hill
GRADE 3 Test – MSPAP, 2002 Publisher – CTB McGraw Hill

School year	2003 – 2004	2002 – 2003	2001 – 2002
Testing month	February	February	May
SCHOOL SCORES			
% at or above Basic	100	100	100
% at or above Proficient	96	92	79
% at Advanced	54	47	27
Number of students tested	99	86	81
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES			
1. White			
% at or above Basic	100	100	100
% at or above Proficient	98	91	80
% at Advanced	53	46	26
Number of students tested	89	80	76
2. Special Education			
% at or above Basic	100	100	100
% at or above Proficient	100	80	43
% at Advanced	64	40	43
Number of students tested	11	15	7
STATE SCORES			
% at or above Basic	100	100	100
% at or above Proficient	72	65	29
% at Advanced	20	15	2

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Maryland School Assessment (MSA) for 2003 and 2004
Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) for 2002

MATHEMATICS Test – MSA, 2003 and 2004 Publisher – CTB McGraw Hill
GRADE 5 Test – MSPAP, 2002 Publisher – CTB McGraw Hill

School year	2003 – 2004	2002 – 2003	2001 – 2002
Testing month	February	February	May
SCHOOL SCORES			
% at or above Basic	100	100	100
% at or above Proficient	93	83	75
% at Advanced	31	18	16
Number of students tested	83	80	68
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES			
1. White			
% at or above Basic	100	100	100
% at or above Proficient	94	83	78
% at Advanced	33	17	17
Number of students tested	77	72	59
2. Special Education			
% at or above Basic	100	100	100
% at or above Proficient	71	50	33
% at Advanced	0	0	0
Number of students tested	7	10	6
STATE SCORES			
% at or above Basic	100	100	100
% at or above Proficient	63	55	40
% at Advanced	13	10	10

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Maryland School Assessment (MSA) for 2003 and 2004
Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) for 2002

READING	Test – MSA, 2003 and 2004	Publisher – Harcourt Assessment
GRADE 3	Test – MSPAP, 2002	Publisher – CTB McGraw Hill

School year	2003 – 2004	2002 – 2003	2001 – 2002
Testing month	February	February	May
SCHOOL SCORES			
% at or above Basic	100	100	100
% at or above Proficient	98	86	73
% at Advanced	40	38	25
Number of students tested	99	86	81
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES			
1. White			
% at or above Basic	100	100	100
% at or above Proficient	99	86	74
% at Advanced	44	39	24
Number of students tested	89	80	76
2. Special Education			
% at or above Basic	100	100	100
% at or above Proficient	91	80	57
% at Advanced	36	20	29
Number of students tested	11	15	7
STATE SCORES			
% at or above Basic	100	100	100
% at or above Proficient	71	58	31
% at Advanced	13	9	4

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Maryland School Assessment (MSA) for 2003 and 2004
Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) for 2002

READING Test – MSA, 2003 and 2004 Publisher – Harcourt Assessment
GRADE 5 Test – MSPAP, 2002 Publisher – CTB McGraw Hill

School year	2003 – 2004	2002 – 2003	2001 – 2002
Testing month	February	February	May
SCHOOL SCORES			
% at or above Basic	100	100	100
% at or above Proficient	99	93	63
% at Advanced	65	49	25
Number of students tested	83	80	68
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES			
1. White			
% at or above Basic	100	100	100
% at or above Proficient	99	93	67
% at Advanced	66	51	26
Number of students tested	77	72	59
2. Special Education			
% at or above Basic	100	100	100
% at or above Proficient	100	80	*
% at Advanced	43	20	*
Number of students tested	7	10	*
STATE SCORES			
% at or above Basic	100	100	100
% at or above Proficient	68	66	42
% at Advanced	29	26	11

* - too few students to be recorded as a subgroup